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ready to hazard his own interpretations of political events and to advance his personal opinions as to the wisdom or folly of both men and movements. Some of these opinions, at any rate, fail to indicate a maturity of judgment at all proportionate to the assurance with which they are set forth. The relatively narrow scope of the field, and the author's industrious attention to it has resulted in the accumulation of a bewildering mass of details concerning petty intercolonial bickerings through which the reader finds no little difficulty in threading his way. The gift of historical perspective, however, and the faculty of winnowing the salient from the subsidiary are qualities which, among research students, are as rare as they are desirable.

The volume contains three short but appropriate appendices, and a helpful index. A bibliography would have been serviceable, particularly in view of the fact that many of the works referred to in the footnotes are nowhere indicated by their unabbreviated titles. In workmanship the book suffers from the handicap of its publication in the press of a provincial newspaper; but with due allowance for this fact the mechanism of the volume is very creditable.

WILLIAM BENNETT MUNRO.

The Seigniorial System in Canada: A Study in French Colonial Policy.

By WILLIAM BENNETT MUNRO. (New York: Longmans, Green and Company. 1907. Pp. xiii, 296.)

This book is the result of a painstaking and scholarly study of the institutions of French Canada. The author, especially interested in his theme as a Canadian by birth, selected it for his doctor's thesis at Harvard University and was awarded the Toppin prize in 1900 on his dissertation. "The whole study has since been revised, somewhat rearranged, and considerably enlarged." It is now published as volume thirteen in the Harvard Historical Studies and fully sustains the hitherto uniform excellence of that admirable series.

Although the book is divided into twelve chapters, each of which is rounded into such a complete discussion of a separate theme that it might almost be called an essay, the whole study falls naturally into three parts, the second of which really constitutes the body of the book.

The first part includes chapters one to three, and provides the historical setting of the seigniorial system as found in Canada, the author taking his spring from as far back as the middle of the sixteenth cen-

tury. Especial attention is properly called to the fact that while a large majority of the habitants were Norman peasants, the *Coutume de Paris* was made the fundamental law of the land and was administered by officials and priests who came mainly from Paris. There can be no doubt that "since the greater part of the colonists were most familiar with the *Coutume de Normandie* (codified in 1583), the introduction of this custom, while it might have involved some difficulties, would undoubtedly have obviated many of the evils which attended the working of the seigniorial system in the colony" (p. 10). The second and third chapters deal with the earlier and later seigniorial grants, the point of division being the year 1666, two years after the Custom of Paris was proclaimed, one year after the coming of Talon and the year in which "the Company of the West Indies relinquished its right of making land grants in the colony." There was constant friction between the intendants on the one hand, who wished the grants to be peopled as rapidly as possible and to protect the *censitaires* so far as the law allowed, and the seigniors on the other, who were trying to monopolize the water frontage and to increase the value of their holdings by extending as far as possible the dues which they might then or in the future demand of the inhabitants. The benevolence of the French despotism is probably nowhere more apparent than in the constant struggle of the royal representatives in Canada to curb the rapacity of the noblesse, who were urged on by the direst poverty in many cases and in all cases burdened rather than supported by their feudal connections.

The body of the book, chapters four to ten, consists of a careful and detailed analysis, with ample illustration, of the interrelation of the parties to the seigniorial system. The duties of the seignior to his superiors are treated under six heads: (1) fealty and homage, (2) *aveu et dénombrement* (his duty to furnish statistical information relative to his seigniory), (3) his obligation to people his grant, (4) a mutation fine, (5) military service, and (6) a number of reservations, etc. The seignior was with great difficulty held to his third duty and was on occasion punished with confiscation for delinquency. Chapters five to seven deal with the seignior's relation to his inferiors, all of chapter six being devoted to the banalities, only one of which—that of the mill—we find enforced in Canada to any extent. "Both the French government and its colonial representatives sought to develop the system of banal mills in the interest of the poorer habitants" (p. 125). The banal mill was required of the seignior because it was necessary for the habitant, the banal bake-oven was seldom used because it was more convenient for the baking to be done at home.

Among the duties owed by the peasant to his lord (grinding at the common mill was a privilege), the corvée was the most burdensome. Frequent contact with the *courier de bois* and the Indian made the farmer impatient of anything savoring of servitude. In a democratic atmosphere corvée service was "hateful, odious, humiliating and a badge of servitude." Nevertheless, this service was rendered as was the duty to leave certain timber and stone undisturbed, to surrender to the seignior one out of every eleven fish, to abstain from the Indian trade and to use the seigniorial ferry. The seigniorial court, however, was not a success. Although between 1627 and 1663 "more than sixty seigniorial grants were made by the company and in almost every instance judicial rights were given to the seigniors" (p. 146), "the attempt of the French crown to establish a system of private justice in New France had failed signally" (p. 158). The main causes assigned for this failure were the expense of the system to the seignior and the possibility of appeal by the habitant.

The third part of the book, two chapters, is devoted to the British administration and final abolition of the seigniorial system.

The value of the volume is greatly enhanced by the addition of a "Bibliographical Appendix" which is in fact a critical essay on the available sources. There is also an "alphabetical list of printed materials" and an index which covers twenty pages. The author has based his study "wholly upon primary materials" and has observed "the recognized canons of sound historical writing by giving definite references, page by page, to the sources from which information has been drawn." He has also added a number of illuminating footnotes, witness the explanation of the *arpent de Paris* (p. 24).

EDGAR DAWSON.

A Treatise of the Laws, Privileges, and Usages of Parliament. By SIR THOMAS ERSKINE MAY, K.C.B., D.C.L. Eleventh edition. Revised from the tenth edition; Books I and II edited by T. Lonsdale Webster, Second Clerk Assistant of the House of Commons. Book III edited by William E. Grey. (London: William Clowes and Sons. Pp. liii, 1001.)

Sir Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice* is not intended merely for the historical student. Its first purpose is to serve as a practical handbook and guide to the settlement of disputed points as they come up in parliamentary procedure. It is therefore essential that it should be